

Sūrah Raḥmān

Tone of the *Sūrah* and its Relationship with the Previous one

Some people have regarded this *sūrah* to be Madīnan. However, in my opinion, not a single verse of it appears to be Madīnan much less the whole *sūrah*. The whole surah has the same tone and rhythm and a reader clearly feels that it was revealed in one episode.

With regard to its tone, this *sūrah* belongs to that category of *sūrahs* which were revealed at the time of the Prophet's Makkan life in which his opponents, in their fury to refute him, had become adamant on a demand: unless a sign of punishment was shown to them, they were not ready to accept the fact that if they rejected the call of this new faith, they would be punished; they were also not willing to accept the fact that a day was to come when they would encounter eternal punishment and everlasting humiliation.

Because of this mentality of stubbornness and obduracy, the verse وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ was repeated in the previous *sūrah*. Now in this *sūrah* the verse رَبِّأَيُّ آلاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ is repeated again and again. Obviously this style of directing attention to one specific thing is adopted when either the addressee is so stubborn that he is not ready to accept anything against his wishes or he is such a dunce that unless he is spoon fed and called to attention on each and every point he cannot be expected to understand any thing rational.

Keeping the mentality of the addressee and his temperament in consideration is essential for any discourse. If a speaker is not able to keep this in consideration, his discourse will not be in accordance with the situation neither will it be eloquent. Those who have no idea of these requirements of a discourse are unable to judge the positive aspects and subtleties of such a discourse. They regard the repetition of a verse to be a needless recurrence, which obviously is a defect of the discourse. Consequently, some foolish people have objected on this recurrence found in this *sūrah*. The fact is that if they understand the nature of people who this *sūrah* addresses, they will exclaim that at every instance the recurring verse is fully embedded in its context the way a pearl is embedded in a ring.

In Sūrah Qamar, the obdurate people of the Quraysh were told to learn a lesson from messengers and the history of their people; why are they

adamant to believe only when they see the scourge with their very eyes; it is a great favour of the Almighty that to educate and remind them He has revealed a book which is very appropriate for this objective. Now in this *sūrah*, this subject is brought up in a new and unique way. They are told that it is the merciful nature of the Almighty because of which He has taught them the Qur'ān. It was a requirement of their nature that for this purpose only the Qur'ān be revealed. If He has taught them the ability of speech, it means that they can understand and make others understand as well. It is a right of this exalted ability that instead of the lash of punishment it be made the means of their education. However, it is their misfortune, that instead of benefiting from God's mercy and favour, they are hastily demanding a new sign. If they want a sign, why do not they deliberate on the signs of the heavens and the earth and the world found inside man and that outside him – all of which they observe daily and which teach them the same lesson which the Qur'ān is teaching? What is the need for some new sign in their presence? After this, each and every sign of the heavens and earth is pinpointed and the attention of these obdurate people is directed towards each of them. What more signs do they want? Alas! How many of their Lord's signs will they deny?

Some Difficulties of this *Sūrah*

As far as the difficulties of the *sūrah* relating to the style, language and interpretation are concerned, they shall *inshallāh* be dealt with under the relevant verses of the *sūrah*. However, there are two things which I would like to clarify here in the introduction so that explaining them again and again is not required. The first of these relates to research on the word *آلاء* and the second of these relates to the nature of address in the verse: *فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ*.

The word *آلاء* is the plural of *إِلَى* and *أَلَى* and *إِلَى*. All the leading lexicographers and exegetes regard it to mean “favours”. However, my mentor, Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī in his *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān* has differed with this opinion. In his opinion, this word does not merely come in the meaning referred to above; it has a wider connotation. He begins his discussion on this issue with the following words:¹

Even though there is a consensus that the word *آلاء* means “favours” however, the Qur'ān and classical Arabic literature does not support this claim. It is evident through a comprehensive analysis of classical

1. Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī, *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān*, 1st ed. (Azamgarh: Maṭba‘ Islāh, 1358 AH), 11.

Arabic poetry that its real meaning is feats, miracles, marvels of nature and wisdom. However, a greater part of God's miracles and marvels is based on His signs of mercy. For this reason, people concluded that the real meaning of ءَالٍ is "favours".

In this regard, al-Farāhī has also presented his interpretation of a narrative attributed to Ibn 'Abbās (rta) in which he mentions that this word means "favours". He says that our illustrious scholars of the past would answer a question posed to them keeping in view the occasion and background. They would specify that at a particular instance the word had been used in a particular meaning

After these introductory sentences he has presented corroboratory evidence in support of his view from the works of poets belonging to the age of *jāhiliyyah* as well as from certain Ḥamāsī poets. The poets from the age of *jāhiliyyah* include: Ṭarfah, Mayyah bint Ḍarār, Muḥalḥal, Rabi'ah ibn Maqrūm, Ajda' al-Ḥamadānī, Fuḍālah ibn Zayd and Khansā'. It is evident from this material that in the works of famous poets of the age of *jāhiliyyah* – poets whose poetry is regarded to be a source of language and morphology, this word is not merely used to mean "favours"; it has a much wider connotation that includes favours, power, majesty, signs, miracles, marvels, feats and other similar connotations.

It is a source of great pleasure for me that the translators and exegetes of these times are referring to the research of Imām Farāhī (even though without properly citing him). However, since the works of Imām Farāhī are in Arabic, people who do not have a strong grasp of it are misled. It is evident from this discussion that he does not contest that the meaning of this word is "favours"; however, he does contest that this is its only meaning.

All the exegetes are unanimous that the verse قَبَائِلَ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُكَذِّبَان addresses both man and jinn. The Qur'ān itself has explained this in various styles in this *sūrah*. However, two questions arise here. First, just as the message of the Qur'ān is meant for man, is it also for the jinn? If the answer to this question is in the affirmative, then a further question arises: Did the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) conclusively convey the truth from the Almighty to the jinn also just as he did to his people?

The answer to this question, in my opinion, is that keeping in view the principles set forth by the Almighty in the Qur'ān regarding sending His prophets and the nature of their responsibility in disseminating their message, it is difficult to say that the Prophet (sws) was also sent towards the jinn and that just as he had conclusively communicated the truth to his people, he had also done so to the jinn. It is mentioned in the Qur'ān in various styles that the prophet sent to a nation is from among them; he

speaks in their tongue and is the best representative of their nature; by setting an example, he encourages the good in people and discourages the evil in them and for this reason his life becomes an example for every person. It is obvious that none of these things is possible for the Prophet (sws) viz a viz the jinn.

Moreover, it is also known that he has not informed us of any efforts he made in calling the jinn to faith and in reforming and instructing them just as he did so in the case of his people. What at most can be claimed is that he did meet a group of jinn once or twice or that a group of jinn had heard the Qur'ān from the Prophet (sws) and had expressed their liking for it. It is mentioned earlier in Sūrah Aḥqāf and a mention is coming up in Sūrah Jinn that a group of jinn had heard a few verses of the Qur'ān from the blessed tongue of the Prophet (sws) and liked them. At these places too, it is specified that the Prophet (sws) did not directly come to know of this liking; he was informed of it by the Almighty. Such chance meetings are obviously not enough for the dissemination of a message and its conclusive communication which every prophet and messenger did for his people and for which purpose a messenger is in fact sent to his people. If the jinn are addressed in this way in some places in the Qur'ān, it is not because they are its direct addressees; the actual reason, in my opinion, is that just as when the clouds of mercy send down rain which drenches both dry and damp areas, in a similar manner, the mercy of the Qur'ān at times extends to the jinn – specially in those matters of principle which are common between them and man. The concepts of monotheism, the day of judgement, the reward and punishment which will take place on it, the truth, justice and other similar things are absolutely the same in both these creatures. If there is a difference, it relates to those areas which pertain to peculiarities of genre of the two. The real objective of this *sūrah*, as has been discussed earlier, is to remind unmindful people of the signs of power, wisdom, mercy and providence of God and to jolt and awaken them. For this reason, besides addressing the unmindful among mankind, it also addresses the unmindful jinn. This awe and dread of the discourse, as a result, has spread to the whole world.

It is possible that in the light of this discussion a question arise in someone's mind: Just as prophets and messengers have been sent to mankind from among them, similarly prophets and messengers from among the jinn must have been sent to them and would have taken up the responsibility of reforming and instructing them in their language and keeping in view the characteristics of their genre. I accept the responsibility of this inference. It is in complete accordance with sense and reason and also in absolute harmony with the practice of God regarding His prophets and messengers as enshrined in the Qur'ān at many

instances. If the jinn like mankind are creatures who have been given the freedom to exercise their will and who will be held accountable by God for their deeds and will be accordingly rewarded and punished, then it is essential as per the practice of God for their guidance, prophets and messengers must have been sent to them and it is also essential that they must have called them to the truth in their own language. In my opinion, there is not a single verse in the Qur'ān which goes against this inference. On the contrary, there are various verses which clearly go in its favour.

In Sūrah Baqarah, where the incident of Adam and Satan is mentioned, both of them are addressed at the end in the following words:

فُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ
وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (٢: ٣٧)

We ordered: “Go [out] from here; then if ever comes to you any guidance from Me, then whosoever follows My guidance will have no fear, nor shall they grieve.” (2:37)

In the above mentioned verse, just as the Almighty has promised Adam and his progeny that He will send guidance to them, He has also made this very promise with Iblīs and His progeny.

Similarly, it is clearly stated in Sūrah An‘ām that messengers were also sent to the jinn:

يَا مَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِنْكُمْ يَقُصُّونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِي وَيُزِيدُونَكُمْ
لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا قَالُوا شَهِدْنَا عَلَى أَنْفُسِنَا وَغَرَّتْهُمْ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَشَهِدُوا عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ
أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا كَافِرِينَ (٢: ١٣٠)

“O Jinn and men! Did there not come to you messengers of your own who proclaimed to you My revelations and warned you of this day of resurrection?” They will reply: “We bear witness against our own souls.” And indeed, the life of this world deceived them and they themselves testified against their own selves that they had been disbelievers. (6:130)

The coherence in this *sūrah* is very evident. The *sūrah* begins with the declaration that the Qur'ān is a manifestation of the graciousness of the Almighty. The Almighty created man and specially blessed him with the power of speech and comprehension. These grand favours and abilities entail that man should be taught and educated with the most grand heavenly work –the Qur'ān – and not through torment and punishment. It

is the extreme misfortune of those who, instead of seeking guidance from it, demand to see the promised doom.

After this, the various signs in the world around man and those within him are pointed to and two of the Almighty's creations – men and jinn – are repeatedly warned and jolted to reflect on them and asked how many such signs would they deny.

First and foremost are mentioned those signs and manifestations which point to the fact that the Almighty greatly cherishes justice and does not approve anything contrary to justice and equity at all in the world He has created.

These are followed by those signs which indicate that the tremendous and extremely vast system of sustenance which the Almighty has established on the earth entails that man shall one day be held accountable for the profound blessings he has been given. Those who deserve to be rewarded shall be rewarded, and those who deserve to be punished shall be punished.

A reference is then made to the fact that it is the Almighty who has created men and jinn from fire and clay and He can easily create them a second time. There is no difficulty for Him in this regard.

This whole Universe is under His control; He is the Lord of the East and the West. Whatever rises, rises with His permission and whatever sets, sets with His permission.

After this, it is asserted that the conflicting elements in the universe are in harmony with one another to fulfil a greater purpose which is over and above their creation. This bears witness to the fact that a sovereign will is dominant over these elements which creates harmony between them and uses them for the collective welfare of the universe. If this were not so, the universe would have been destroyed by a clash between its conflicting elements. That it is surviving is ample testimony to the fact that a single supreme and omnipotent power controls it.

An indication is then made that Allah alone is immortal and all the rest are mortal.

Next it is expressed that all except the Almighty are needy and He is the only one who fulfils their needs. The foolish who ask from others actually receive from Him alone.

An affirmation is then made of the fact that the Day wherein accountability of deeds shall take place is certain to come and on that Day no one –neither man nor jinn– will be able to run away from the Almighty's grasp. On that Day, no evidence will be needed to convict a criminal as his forehead will bear witness to his sins. He will then be grabbed by his forehead and feet and flung into Hell.

Next, the features and characteristics of the Paradise which the

muqarrabīn shall receive are delineated, followed by the features and characteristics of the Paradise which the *ashāb al-yamīn* will be blessed with.

Section I (Verses 1-30)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الرَّحْمَنُ (١) عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ (٢) خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ (٣) عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ (٤) الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ
يَحْسَبَانِ (٥) وَالنَّجْمُ وَالشَّجَرُ يَسْجُدَانِ (٦) وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ (٧) أَلَّا
تَظْلَعُوا فِي الْمِيزَانِ (٨) وَأَقِيمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيزَانَ (٩) وَالْأَرْضَ وَضَعَهَا
لِلْأَنَامِ (١٠) فِيهَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَالنَّخْلُ ذَاتُ الْأَكْمَامِ (١١) وَالْحَبُّ ذُو الْعَصْفِ وَالرَّيْحَانُ (١٢)
فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (١٣) خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ كَالْفَخَّارِ (١٤) وَخَلَقَ
الْجَانَّ مِنْ مَّارِجٍ مِّن نَّارٍ (١٥) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (١٦) رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ وَرَبُّ
الْمَغْرِبَيْنِ (١٧) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (١٨) مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيَانِ (١٩) بَيْنَهُمَا
بَرْزَخٌ لَا يَبْغِيَانِ (٢٠) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٢١) يُخْرِجُ مِنْهُمَا اللُّؤْلُؤَ وَالْمَرْجَانَ
(٢٢) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٢٣) وَلَهُ الْجَوَارِ الْمُنشَآتُ فِي الْبَحْرِ كَالْأَعْلَامِ (٢٤)
فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٢٥) كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ (٢٦) وَيَبْقَى وَجْهَ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ
وَالْإِكْرَامِ (٢٧) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٢٨) يَسْأَلُهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ كُلُّ
يَوْمٍ هُوَ فِي شَأْنٍ (٢٩) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٣٠)

In the name of God, the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

It is the Merciful who has taught the Qur'ān. He created man; taught him speech. (1-4)

The sun and the moon pursue their ordered course. And the stars and the trees also bow down in adoration. And He raised high the sky and placed the balance in it so that you too should not transgress that balance. And weigh justly and do not measure less. (5-9)

And He laid out the earth for His creatures. In it are fruits, dates in coverings, chaff-covered grain and scented flowers – So O Jinn and Men! So which of your Lord's blessings would you deny? (10-13)

He created man from potter's clay, and the jinn from the flame of fire. So which of your Lord's powers would you deny? (14-16)

He alone is the Lord of both borders of the East and He alone is the

Lord of both borders of the West. So which of your Lord's majesties would you deny? (17-18)

He has let loose the two oceans: they meet one another. Yet between them is a barrier which they cannot cross. So which of your Lord's miracles would you deny? (19-21)

Pearls and corals come out from both. So which of your Lord's wonders would you deny? (22-23)

In His control are ships which are like mountains rising above the ocean. So which of your Lord's marvels would you deny? (24-25)

All that lives on the earth is destined to die and only the glorious and majestic person of your Lord will abide forever. So which of your Lord's majesties would you deny? (26-28)

And whatever is in the heavens and the earth ask from Him alone. At all times, His majesty has a newer manifestation. So which of your Lord's majesties would you deny? (29-30)

Explanation

الرَّحْمَنُ (١) عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ (٢)²

The implication of this verse is that it is a special favour of God that He has revealed a thing as blessed and merciful as the Qur'ān for their instruction. Had He wanted, He could have sent punishment as per their demand; however, out of His great mercy He blessed them with a benevolent scripture so that they could read and understand it and in the light of its guidance reform their misguided concepts and deeds. As a result, they would be able to succeed in this world as well as in the next. In short, when the Merciful God has blessed them with His mercy, why do they demand His punishment instead of demanding His mercy.

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ (٣) عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ (٤)³

The implication of these verses is that besides God's mercy, the creation of man and his abilities also require that instead of torment, a scripture of guidance be sent down. God created man and taught him speech. This power of speech bears witness that the Creator has made him into a sane and sensible person. He has the ability to hear and understand things and is able to distinguish good from evil. He can communicate this to others also and make them understand as well. When he is blessed with these multifarious abilities, then this clearly shows that God wants that He teach Him through speech and not through

2. It is the Merciful who has taught the Qur'ān.

3. He created man; taught him speech.

the lash which teaches animals.

Here it needs to be appreciated that the ability of speech given to man bears witness to other multifarious abilities found in him. A natural corollary of the faculty of speech is that man has intellect, he can derive principles from parts and vice versa and simulate parts from principles. He has the ability to reason, to infer and to form opinions. For this very reason, Aristotle regards this ability of man as one which distinguishes him from animals. If he is devoid of this ability, then he is not fit to be called a human being; he is merely an animal which walks on two legs. It is evident from this fact that those who, instead of understanding a reality on the basis of reasoning, insist that they will only believe in it after seeing it are no less than animals even though they may be living in grand houses.

الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ بِحُسْبَانٍ (٥) وَالنَّجْمُ وَالشَّجَرُ يَسْجُدَانِ (٦)⁴

Attention is drawn to the signs found in this universe; if signs are required to substantiate the warnings of the Qur'ān, then why should people wait for a new sign; they should just observe the heavens above them; they should see how the sun and the moon adhere to their paths with such punctuality and discipline. There is never a discrepancy even of a second. People should also see how these heavenly bodies are observing the limits set for them by the Almighty. Never does the sun exceed its ordained path to intrude into the path ordained for the moon nor does the moon intrude into the path ordained for the sun (See, the Qur'ān, 36:40). Does not this sign every day teach man the lesson that if the Creator of this universe has subjected such grand creations as the sun and the moon to certain laws, why will He not subject man to His commands? If man breaks these laws and dares spread anarchy in this world, why would He not punish him? It is most befitting for man to abide by the laws He has implemented in every nook and corner of this universe.

After mentioning how the sun and the moon abide by the limits ordained for them and which in religious parlance is called *taqwā*, mentioned in the verse وَالنَّجْمُ وَالشَّجَرُ يَسْجُدَانِ is the prostration of the stars of the heavens and trees of the earth: they bow down before their Creator and through this practice of theirs call upon man that he too must not be rebellious to his Creator and should worship and bow down before Him in full obedience.

The prostration of the stars and the trees is explained at various places of this *tafsīr*. Readers can look it up. Citing it here would only needlessly

4. The sun and the moon pursue their ordered course. And the stars and the trees also bow down in adoration.

lengthen the discussion.

Some people have interpreted the word النَّجْمُ to mean things like small plants, thorny trees and creepers. Probably, they were not able to understand the purpose of mentioning trees with stars and for this reason they had to make this far-fetched interpretation. The fact of the matter is that there exists great commonality in the attributes of the two. The Qur'ān has mentioned at many places the prostration of both the stars and the trees in various styles. It is because of this harmony between the two that they are mentioned together in this verse as well. It shows how the heavens and the earth are in harmony with one another: the Creator of both is the same before Whom the stars of the heavens and the trees of the earth prostrate. It should remain in consideration that Mujāhid, Qatādah and Ḥasan interpret the word النَّجْمُ in its conventional meaning ie stars. Ibn Kathīr too supports their view and has cited the following verse as corroboratory evidence:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُومُ
وَالْجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ وَالْدَّوَابُّ (١٨:٢٢)

Do you not see that those in the heavens and the earth, the sun and the moon and the stars, the mountains and the trees, the beasts, and countless men – all prostrate before God? (22:18)

وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ (٧)⁵

After directing attention to some prominent signs of the heavens, attention is directed towards the heavens themselves: how the Almighty has raised this unfathomable roof without any columns. No one can have an idea of its vastness. In spite of this immeasurable expanse, such is the nature of the balance found in it that no one can point out any fissure or fault in it. At another place, it is stated:

خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا وَأَلْقَى فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ (١٠:٣١)

He raised the heavens without visible pillars, and set firm mountains on the earth lest it should fall away with you to one side. (31:10)

In Sūrah Mulk, the words are:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا مَا تَرَى فِي خَلْقِ الرَّحْمَنِ مِنْ تَفَافُوتٍ فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرَى

5. And He raised high the sky and placed the balance in it.

مِنْ فُطُورِ ثُمَّ ارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنْقَلِبْ إِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَهُوَ حَسِيرٌ (٦٧: ٣-٤)

He Who created seven heavens one above the other. You will not find any fault with what has been created by the Most Gracious. Look about: can you see any flaw? Look again and again. Your look will come back to you worn out and overcome. (67:3-4)

It is evident from the words *بَعِيرٍ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا* that in order to maintain balance in the roof of the sky, the Almighty has used gravitational columns which cannot be observed.

أَلَّا تَتَّعُوا فِي الْمِيزَانِ (٨)

The implication is that the placement of a balance in the sky by the Creator, without which it cannot stay in its shape, informs us of the temperament and nature of the Creator: He wants that man too in his circle of authority should give due regard to balance, justice and equity; he should not create any disturbance in this system otherwise the whole system of sustenance will be inflicted with disorder. The implication is that it is to this system of justice and fairness the Qur'ān is calling man – the system whose testimony is found in every nook and corner of the sky spread above. The Qur'ān is warning people that if they transgress the bounds of justice by being blinded by their arrogance and rebelliousness, they will bear its punishment not only in this world but also in the Hereafter. Why is it that they are not being able to understand such a clear thing whose testimony is borne by every nook and corner of the heavens and the earth? Why are they looking for the lash of punishment by disregarding all these telling signs found around them?

وَأَقِيمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيزَانَ (٩)

The verse above mentioned a principle. Now in this verse an everyday reality which is based on this principle is brought to notice: When the God below whose sky's roof they live owns the balance and loves justice, they too should not lead the life of dishonesty and deceit; they should weigh and measure with full honesty and not weigh less. While commenting on the anecdote of the Prophet Shu'ayb's people, I have alluded to the fact that weighing and measuring less is not just an isolated evil: it is a horrible sign of the disorder that prevails in a society. A further aspect which is highlighted here is that this evil is in fact

6. So that you too should not transgress that balance.

7. And weigh justly and do not measure less.

against the system of balance and justice on which the Almighty has created the heavens and the earth. If a people accept this disorder, then it means that it is after razing down the very foundation on which the Almighty has built this world. Obviously, the Almighty will never bear such people in the world He has created.

Here another thing which is worthy of consideration is that the same thing has been stated in a positive and a negative way. A deliberation on the Qur'ān reveals that this style is adopted at instances when not obeying the real directive can lead to very dangerous consequences. It is evident from this that justly weighing and measuring is a directive which has great significance. By its nature, it is a corollary of the system of justice on which the Almighty has created this world. It is also evident from this that a nation which disrupts and disobeys this directive creates disorder in the whole society.

وَالْأَرْضَ وَضَعَهَا لِلْأَنَامِ (١٠) فِيهَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَالتَّخْلُ ذَاتُ الْأَكْمَامِ (١١) وَالْحَبُّ ذُو الْعَصْفِ
وَالرَّيْحَانُ (١٢)⁸

After directing attention towards the grand manifestations of God found in the heavens, attention is now drawn to the resources of providence found in the earth. The word used for the heavens is رَفَعَ and in contrast the word وَضَعَ is very aptly used for the earth. The implication is that the heavens were raised high like a roof and the earth was spread out like a floor so that this arrangement could become a comfortable abode for His creatures. Moreover, just as the heavens were decked with lamps like the sun, the moon and the stars so that this house was provided with light and heat, similarly various types of fruit, grain and flowers were provided so that its residents obtain their sustenance from them and satisfy their taste-buds and the flowers become a means of providing them with sweet scent and scenic beauty.

Here besides grain, flowers and fruits are specially mentioned to point to the fact that the Almighty has not merely provided man fodder to fill his belly, He has also catered for his aesthetic taste, for his proclivity towards delicacies and for his desire for embellishment. All this does not bear evidence to merely His providence, it also bears evidence to the elaborate nature of His providence. Similarly, the attribute ذُو الْعَصْفِ which qualifies الْحَبُّ and the attribute ذَاتُ الْأَكْمَامِ which qualifies التَّخْلُ show His great favour to His creatures. In other words, He has not just tossed grain and fruit towards man; He has elaborately packed each and

8. And He laid out the earth for His creatures. In it are fruits, dates in coverings, chaff-covered grain and scented flowers.

every grain and fruit in an amazing manner. Obviously, this elaborate arrangement has been made so that man recognizes the obligation he owes to God's sustenance and favours, remains thankful to Him and while leading his life always keeps in consideration the fact that He who has made all this arrangement without man being entitled to it in any way will not let him go scot-free. He will bring about a day in which man is held accountable for his deeds.

Here an important point relating to رَّيْحَانُ is worth mentioning. Some people have interpreted it to mean leaves; however, this word has not been used in this meaning in Arabic nor is there any occasion for it to be used here in this meaning. It seems that these people were confounded by the mention of flowers with grain though there is no connection between the two. This led them to this bizarre interpretation of the word whereas there is a particular reason for this mention, as I have explained above.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (١٣)⁹

This verse will occur repeatedly ahead, and it is the most important verse of the *sūrah*. For this reason, I have explained the meaning of آلَاء in the introduction to this *sūrah* as well as the nature of the address to man and jinn found in this verse. However, I will explain one thing here: there is a special reason for mentioning here the rejecters among the jinn with the rejecters among the Quraysh: this campaign of rejection had gained great impetus and the devils among men and jinn had joined hands and were trying their best to defeat the call of the truth. For this reason, the Almighty has addressed them directly and has rebuked them and also challenged them, as will become evident from later verses, that in spite of their profound efforts the true call shall prevail and progress. I have already explained in the introduction to this *sūrah* that it was revealed in that phase of the Makkan period in which the Quraysh were at the peak of their obduracy and hostility. Obviously, in that phase, they must have been supported with special help from the devils among the jinn. The situation required that both these creatures be addressed.

Expressing gratitude on favours to someone who has granted these favours and having a sense of accountability to the providence of God are natural requirements of human nature. A person who benefits from the favours of God but does not acknowledge that as a result he owes some obligation to Him or that he will be held accountable for them shows through this attitude that he denies all these favours. The Qur'ān has rebuked the Quraysh and the jinn who behave similarly on this very

9. So O Jinn and Men! So which of your Lord's blessings would you deny?

denial: on every people before them they can witness the favours of their Lord which remind them (ie. the Quraysh and the jinn) of a day of accountability; however, they are adamantly denying them; so which of the favours and majesties of their Lord will they deny?

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ كَالْفَخَّارِ (١٤) وَخَلَقَ الْجَانَّ مِنْ مَّارِجٍ مِّن نَّارٍ (١٥) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (١٦)¹⁰

These verses by reminding man and jinn of their creation direct their attention to their re-creation: they should not remain under the misconception that their Lord is unable to recreate them after creating them once, and so the coming about of a day of accountability is an impossibility; they should remember that the very material from which He created them is available to Him in full quantity and God's ability to create also exists just as it existed when He created them the first time; so if they cannot deny their first creation, they also do not have any reason to deny their re-creation.

The word صَلْصَالٍ refers to pure mud and فَخَّارٍ refers to mud which becomes dry like a potsherd. All the phases through which human life passes until it reaches its culmination in the form of a human being are referred to in the Qur'ān at various places. At one instance, it is said that man is created from a fluid; at another, mud is referred to and, at some others, smelly kneaded clay is alluded to. Similarly, at some places dry mud is mentioned. The final phase mentioned is that from a drop of sperm man's offspring is initiated. These are the evolutionary stages of human life which have already been explained in verse twenty six of Sūrah Hījr. The purpose of mentioning them is to make man observe within his own self the grandeur, power and wisdom of God so that he is able to comprehend that it is God's majesty which extracted him from fluid and mire and then nourished him in the dry and moderate climate of plateaus and then gradually bestowed him a new shape and set up a system in which he could continue to produce offspring. The objective of stating all these facts is to obviously prove that man's existence – which the Almighty caused to pass through such lengthy processes which culminated in his present form – cannot be purposeless. Simultaneously, another objective is to show that the all-knowing and all-wise God Who can create man from a cell formed from mire can do everything; nothing is beyond Him.

The word مَّارِجٍ in مَّارِجٍ مِّن نَّارٍ means “flame” which is the

10. He created man from potter's clay, and the jinn from the flame of fire. So which of your Lord's powers would you deny?

essence of fire. Just as man is created from the essence and substance of mud, in a similar manner, the jinn have been created from the substance of fire. Their phases of creation are not mentioned in detail in the Qur'ān. The reason for this is that these phases are of an entirely different nature comprehending which would have been difficult for man.

After this occurs the repetitive verse which has already been explained above. Here it would mean that when they observe these majesties and manifestations of power and wisdom in their own existence, why then do they regard it to be far-fetched that God will create them again for their accountability; how many more signs of God will they deny and how many new ones will they demand?

رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ وَرَبُّ الْمَغْرِبَيْنِ (١٧) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (١٨)¹¹

God is the Lord of the East and the West. Neither is there anyone outside His dominion nor does anyone have a share in it. He alone is the owner of all the East and the West. Not an inch of His territory from the heavens and earth is under the control of some else so that he can save the residents of this territory from God's grasp. In Sūrah Ma'ārij, this subject is discussed in the following words: فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِرَبِّ الْمَشَارِقِ وَالْمَغَارِبِ (Nay! I swear by the Lord who is the Master of all the vastness of the East and the West that We can create them in a better form and We are not powerless in this regard, (70:40-41)).

Generally, our exegetes are of the opinion that the duals مَشْرِقَيْنِ and مَغْرِبَيْنِ refer to the east and west of the winters and the summer; this however is quite unnatural. The Qur'ān has used these words in the singular, dual and plural and in all these three forms there is not much difference as far as the meaning is concerned. In the case of dual, the objective is to point to both edges and in the case of plural, the objective is to point to their immeasurable vastness. Examples of such usage of the dual and the plural can be seen in the previous volumes of this *tafsīr*.

After this occurs the repetitive verse; such is the power and majesty of God that both East and West are subservient to Him. If they think that the warning sounded by Him are baseless threats, then how many of God's majesties will they deny?

11. He alone is the Lord of both borders of the East and He alone is the Lord of both borders of the West. So which of your Lord's majesties would you deny?

مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيَانِ (١٩) بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخٌ لَا يَبْغِيَانِ (٢٠) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٢١)¹²

Stated here is an argument in favour of God's *tawḥīd* viz a viz the harmony found between conflicting elements of nature. There seems an apparent conflict and clash in every part of this universe eg the rising and setting of heavenly bodies, the night and the day, the winter and the summer which should not lead a person to think that there exist different intentions and forces in this universe. If a person looks deep into these phenomena, he will find that in every discord exists a deep concord and harmony. Every object together with its opposite comes together to serve a greater cause. This bears witness to the fact that there is a single intention and will which prevails in this universe which wisely uses all the opposing elements of this universe for its collective benefit. The Almighty lets loose two seas. One of them is bitter and the other is sweet. Both strike one another but He puts an invisible curtain between them so that they do meet one another and also remain separate in their own nature. The sweet water does not become sour and the sour water does not become sweet. It is evident from this that people who were misled by the apparent conflict between elements and regarded this universe to be a place of different wills and intentions and then fashioned their own deities according to their own concepts did not observe the great harmony which is found in every discord and which is the greatest argument of *tawḥīd*.

Then occurs the repetitive verse. The implication is that if even after these signs they are under the misconception that if God seizes them, their deities will save them, then which of God's signs will they deny?

يَخْرُجُ مِنْهُمَا اللُّؤْلُؤُ وَالْمَرْجَانُ (٢٢) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٢٣)¹³

This verse points to a common collective benefit which is obtained in spite of this discord: both produce pearls and corals.

Some exegetes have raised the question that pearls and corals only come out of bitter water, while the Qur'an has claimed here that they come out of both types of water. In my opinion, our exegetes have made a baseless claim. I am citing below the relevant portion from the entry "pearl" found in the Encyclopaedia Britannica. It will become evident from it that pearls and corals come out from sweet water as well:

12. He has let loose the two oceans: they meet one another. Yet between them is a barrier which they cannot cross. So which of your Lord's miracles would you deny?

13. Pearls and corals come out from both. So which of your Lord's wonders would you deny?

Freshwater mussels in the temperate zone of the Northern Hemisphere have produced pearls of great value. The freshwater pearls of the US have come principally from the Mississippi river. Pearling has declined greatly in Great Britain, but pearls from the Scottish rivers and from the Conway river in Northern Wales were once in great demand. Pearling is still a carefully fostered industry in central Europe, and the forest streams of Bavaria, in particular, are the source of choice pearls. Freshwater pearling in China has been known before 1000 BC.¹⁴

Even if it is supposed that the pearls and corals only come out of bitter water, this would not make a difference to the statement of the Qur'ān. It is the law of nature that things are created from the collaboration of opposites. A child is born from a mother and a father. Even though he is nourished in the womb of the mother but in reality he comes into being through both the father and the mother. Similarly, pearls are produced by the interaction of both types of water even though they are nourished in bitter water.

After this, occurs the repetitive verse. Its context and placement is evident.

وَلَهُ الْجَوَارِ الْمُنشَآتُ فِي الْبَحْرِ كَالْأَعْلَامِ (٢٤) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٢٥)¹⁵

Attention is directed to another sign which in spite of conflict shows harmony: it is a marvel of God's power that ships which are as huge and hefty as mountains slide on seas whilst the lightest of objects drowns in water. It is a manifestation of God's wisdom and power that an object as heavy as a ship loaded with thousands of tons of cargo sails on water and does not drown. The word لَهُ here means that creating such harmony between discordant elements is only in the authority of God the one and only. It is only because of His power and wisdom that such marvels come into being and man witnesses them at every place, so which of the marvels of his Lord will he deny? This subject is discussed in Sūrah Fāṭir in the following words:

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْبَحْرَانِ هَذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ سَائِغٌ شَرَابُهُ وَهَذَا مِلْحٌ أُجَاجٌ وَمِنْ كُلِّ تَاكُلُونَ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُونَ حُلِيَّةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ فِيهِ مَوَاحِرَ لِبْتَعُوا

14. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "Pearls" Micropedia vol 7, 821.

15. In His control are ships which are like mountains rising above the ocean. So which of your Lord's marvels would you deny?

مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (١٢:٣٥)

And the two seas are not alike. The one is fresh, sweet, and pleasant to drink from, while the other is saltish and bitter. And from both you eat fresh meat, and from both you bring out ornaments to wear. And see how the ships plough their course through them so that you sail away to seek His bounty and so that you remain grateful. (35:12)

In Sūrah Shūrā too this subject has been brought up. For more details, it can be consulted.

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ (٢٦) وَيَبْقَىٰ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ (٢٧) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٢٨)¹⁶

The antecedent of the genitive pronoun in عَلَيْهَا is the earth which is under discussion since verse ten. The way the Almighty has arranged for the sustenance of man in the earth, the marvels and wisdom He has showed in his creation, the way He reigns supreme in every nook and corner of the universe and the way His singularity is evident from the harmony between conflicting elements necessitates that one day all these things will be destroyed. Only the exalted and revered person of God will remain. Everyone will be gathered before Him one day and He will deal with everyone in the manner that person is worthy of. No one has the slightest authority to contest His decisions or open his mouth to intercede for someone without His permission.

The words ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ also occur in the last verse of the *sūrah*. The purpose of mentioning both these words is that only He is exalted in His being and thus only He is worthy of being respected and revered by all. No one else shares these attributes with Him. The word وَجْهُ (face) here signifies the person of God. Face is the most lofty portion of a being; for this reason, at times, it signifies the whole person.

In the end occurs the repetitive verse. It means that whether they hear the warnings of the Prophet or not, one day everyone will be destroyed and only the person of God the Almighty will remain; so which of the signs of their Lord do they deny?

16. All that lives on the earth is destined to die and only the glorious and majestic person of your Lord will abide forever. So Which of your Lord's majesties would you deny?

يَسْأَلُهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ هُوَ فِي شَأْنٍ (٢٩) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٣٠)¹⁷

The implication of this verse is that God is the real person to whom everyone turns. Whoever receives anything receives it from Him. The word سوال (*sawāl*) is used here with regard to its consequences: since everyone who asks receives from God alone, hence irrespective of whom he asks, he in reality asks God for it. Asking from others is useless and ineffective. No one other than God can give him something or take away anything from him. Hence, presenting one's wishes to someone while regarding him to be the granter of wishes is mere foolishness. Whatever a person receives in this world, he receives from God alone and whatever he will receive in the Hereafter, he will receive from God only.

This word also means "needs" as in سَوَاءٌ لِلْسَّائِلِينَ (١٠:٤١) (equal for all those in need, (41:10)). If the verse is interpreted while keeping in view this meaning, it would mean that all those in the heavens and the earth are needy and dependent on God.

The implication of the words كُلَّ يَوْمٍ هُوَ فِي شَأْنٍ is that people should not remain under the misconception that after creating this world, the Almighty has consigned its administration to their alleged deities and Himself has absolutely no role to play in this regard. Those who are under this delusion are absolutely unaware of God's majesty. God Himself is running all the affairs of this world. He alone controls the movements of the sun and the moon and He alone fulfils the needs of His people on this earth. Hence, at every moment of time He is doing something. The word يَوْم here means "time", and it is used in this meaning at many places in the Qur'ān. The implication is that when the Almighty Himself is running the affairs of this world, what need remains of any intercessor? Hence whatever a person wants, he should ask God for it.

After this occurs the repetitive verse and means that the Almighty has not isolated Himself from the affairs of this world; He is continuously involved in managing and controlling them. His majesty and grandeur is evident from every nook and corner of this universe. So which of these majesties will they deny?

سَنَفْرُغُ لَكُمْ أَيُّهَا الثَّقَلَانِ (٣١) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٣٢)¹⁸

The word ثَقَلَانِ refers to both jinnkind and mankind. Since in their

17. And whatever is in the heavens and the earth ask from Him alone. At all times, His majesty has a newer manifestation. So which of your Lord's majesties would you deny?

18. Both you groups! We are about to find time for you! So which of your Lord's majesties would you deny?

collective capacity both become heavy, the word ثَقَلَان has been used. Its usage points to the gravity of the challenge which has been thrown in this verse to both man and jinn at the same time. The implication is that however weighty and hefty they may be in their collective capacity, the Almighty will soon confine all His attention to dealing with them. Confining attention to them here refers to the fact that at the moment this world is functioning, and God's wisdom too requires that it complete its term; however, not far off is the time when this term will reach its completion. At that time, the Almighty will be free from running this world and direct all His attention to man's accountability. He will hold each and every person responsible for his deeds and after judging him shall accordingly reward or punish him. The style and words used also show that the Almighty will not attempt this task in a superficial manner; He will do it with full devotion. This is because it is this task which is the real objective of creating this world. Without it, this world is purposeless.

After this occurs the repetitive verse. Here it means that they have rejected all the obvious signs of this world which point to their accountability; however, what will they do when they will see the Day of Judgement and the court of God with their very eyes. Will they deny that at that time too? If they deny, then how many signs of their Lord will they deny?

Section II (Verses 31-45)

In the succeeding verses, the Day which people are being warned of is portrayed. The coherence and sequence in the discourse is obvious. Readers may now proceed to read these verses.

سَنَفْرُغُ لَكُمْ أَيُّهَا الثَّقَلَانِ (٣١) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٣٢) يَا مَعْشَرَ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسِ إِنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ أَنْ تَنْفُذُوا مِنْ أَقْطَارِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ فَانْفُذُوا لَا تَنْفُذُونَ إِلَّا بِسُلْطَانٍ (٣٣) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٣٤) يُرْسَلُ عَلَيْكُمَا شَوْاظُ مِّنْ نَّارٍ وَنُحَاسٌ فَلَا تَنْتَصِرَانِ (٣٥) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٣٦) فَإِذَا انشَقَّتِ السَّمَاءُ فَكَانَتْ وَرْدَةً كَالدِّهَانِ (٣٧) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٣٨) فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَا يُسْأَلُ عَنْ ذَنْبِهِ إِنْسٌ وَلَا جَانٌّ (٣٩) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٤٠) يُعْرِفُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ بِسِيمَاهُمْ فَيُؤْخَذُ بِالنَّوَاصِي وَالْأَفْقَادِمِ (٤١) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٤٢) هَذِهِ جَهَنَّمُ الَّتِي يُكَذِّبُ بِهَا الْمُجْرِمُونَ (٤٣) يَطُوفُونَ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَ حَمِيمٍ آتٍ (٤٤) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٤٥)

Both you groups! We are about to find time for you! So which of your Lord's majesties would you deny? O Groups of Mankind and Jinn! If you have power to escape from the confines of the heavens and earth, then try to escape! You shall not be able to do so without permission. So which of your Lord's authorities would you deny? Flames of fire shall be hurled at you and pieces of brass. Then you would not be able to shield yourself. So which of your Lord's powers would you deny? (31-36)

So remember the time when the sky splits asunder, and reddens like skin. So which of the wonders of your Lord would you deny? Thus on that day, there will be no need to ask either man or jinn of his sins. So which of your Lord's majesties would you deny? The wrongdoers will be recognized by their signs; thus they shall be seized by their forelocks and their feet [and thrown in Hell]. So which of your Lord's powers would you deny? This is the Hell which the wrongdoers had kept denying. They shall circle between it and its boiling water. So which of your Lord's majesties would you deny? (37-45)

Explanation

يَا مَعْشَرَ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسِ إِنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ أَنْ تَنْفُذُوا مِنْ أَقْطَارِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ فَانْفُذُوا
لَا تَنْفُذُونَ إِلَّا بِسُلْطَانٍ (٣٣) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٣٤)¹⁹

If they think that they are accountable before no one and have absolute authority, they should just attempt to cross the boundaries of the heavens and the earth created by God so that it can be proven that they are beyond God's control or can be beyond His control.

The word سُلْطَان means "authority" as well as "permission". Here it is used in the second of these meanings. However much as they may want to cross the boundaries of the heavens and the earth, they cannot do so. This is only possible when they have the passport to do so and obviously it is only God who can grant this to them.

Then occurs the repetitive verse. Here it would mean that if they are not being able to comprehend even this sign of being helpless and powerless before God, then what other signs and majesties of their Lord will they continue to deny?

19. O Groups of Mankind and Jinn! If you have power to escape from the confines of the heavens and earth, then try to escape! You shall not be able to do so without permission. So which of your Lord's authorities would you deny?

يُرْسَلُ عَلَيْكُمَا شُوَاظٌ مِّن نَّارٍ وَنُحَاسٌ فَلَا تَنْتَصِرَانِ (٣٥) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٣٦)²⁰

The implication is that if anyone from among them tries to exceed the bounds and limits set by God, he shall be pelted with flames of fire and molten brass, and such shall be the profuse nature of this bombardment that that they will not be able to save themselves from it.

The word شُوَاظٌ مِّن نَّارٍ refers to shooting stars about which the Qur'ān has specified that they are pelted at the devils among the jinn who try to penetrate to the higher heavens and eavesdrop on the matters of the unseen. The Qur'ān has cited this admission of the jinnfolk through their own words: (وَأَنَّا ظَنَنَّا أَن لَّن نُّعْجِزَ اللَّهَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَن نُّعْجِزَهُ هَرَبًا (٧٢:١٢)) (and that we acknowledge that we cannot escape God's grasp by setting off to some place in this earth or by running away somewhere in the heavens, (72:12)).

Our exegetes have generally regarded the word نُحَاسٌ to mean "smoke"; however, this word is not conventionally used in this meaning. Some lexicographers have mentioned it as its rare meaning and have also corroborated this meaning by a couplet of the poet Nābighah Dhubyānī. However, in the first place, the provenance of the couplet itself is debatable and secondly, it is not comprehensible why the Qur'ān would leave the common Arabic word دُخَانٌ which means smoke and which it itself has used and use an unconventional word instead whereas the Qur'ān has been revealed in eloquent Arabic. For this reason, I have my reservations in accepting this meaning of the word. In my opinion, the word نُحَاسٌ is used in its conventional meaning and it is a type of shooting star mentioned by the words شُوَاظٌ مِّن نَّارٍ.

The reason for this is that scientific research has shown that most shooting stars (also called meteors) dissolve in air as soon as they fall. They fall in the shape of huge balls of siderites and stones; however, the kinetic energy of the objects transforms into heat as soon as it enters the layers of the atmosphere. This dissolves the shooting stars and they get converted into fire-balls and while falling to the earth, most of their metallic and rocky material is lost or they are transformed into gaseous clouds because of the process of condensation. However, the meteors which have been found on earth can be grouped into three categories:

1. Siderites
2. Aerolites
3. Siderolites

Just as ingredients of iron and stone have been found in these meteors, similarly ingredients of bronze and brass are also found in it. The latter

20. Flames of fire shall be hurled at you and molten brass. Then you would not be able to shield yourself. So which of your Lord's powers would you deny?

have been referred to in this verse by the word *نُحَاسٌ*. Most of these metallic components dissolve because of heat intensity; however, their presence in the meteors which fall to the earth substantiates the statement of the Qur'ān.²¹

فَإِذَا انشَقَّتِ السَّمَاءُ فَكَانَتْ وَرْدَةً كَالدِّهَانِ (٣٧) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٣٨)²²

Though people have interpreted the word *دِهَانٍ* to mean the sediment of oil, however, this word is also commonly used for skin. Since in this meaning, the word is more appropriate to be qualified by redness, I have preferred it. At another place, the words used are: (١١:٨٣) *وَإِذَا السَّمَاءُ كُشِطَتْ* (and when the skies are stripped bare, (83:11)). In other words just as by stripping the skin, the flesh of the body appears red, similarly, the sky too would appear red. Here this redness is compared with the skin, and this comparison is very apt. It is a description of the arrival of the Day of Judgement. The implication is that today they are denying this day; however, the day will come when the sky shall be rent asunder, and this blue roof will appear like red skin; so what will they do at that time? So which of the majesties of their Lord will they deny? The marvels of His power will keep manifesting themselves.

فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَا يُسْأَلُ عَنْ ذَنْبِهِ إِنْسٌ وَلَا جَانٌّ (٣٩) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٤٠) يُعْرِفُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ بِسِيمَاهُمْ فَيُؤْخَذُ بِالتَّوَاصِي وَالْأَقْدَامِ (٤١) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٤٢)²³

They should not remain under the misconception that on that day God and His angels will have to work hard to investigate their crimes. It would not even be required to ask someone of his crime, not to speak of hard work. On that day, each criminal will be recognized by his face; the extent of his crimes and the punishment he will deserve will be known from his very face.

There are many types of questions. Here the questioning which is refuted relates to investigation and scrutiny. At other places, the Qur'ān has stated the reason why this would not be required: on that day, not merely the limbs of the criminals will bear witness; even the roots of

21. *Encyclopedia Britannica: Meteorites*, Macropedia, vol 12, 42.

22. So remember the time when the sky splits asunder, and reddens like skin. So which of the wonders of your Lord would you deny?

23. Thus on that day, there will be no need to ask neither man nor jinn of his sins. So which of your Lord's majesties would you deny? The wrongdoers will be recognized by their signs; thus they shall be seized by their forelocks and their feet [and thrown in Hell]. So which of your Lord's powers would you deny?

each and every hair will bear witness to his crimes. As far as the questions which relate to rebuke, reprimand and sarcasm are concerned, they are not negated here. The questions which are mentioned in the Qur'ān regarding the criminals are of this second type. Thus there is no contradiction in the Qur'ān in this regard; both types of questions are of distinct nature.

The words *فَيُؤْخَذُ بِالنَّوَاصِي وَالْأَقْدَامِ* depict how these criminals will be thrown into Hell: they shall be brought before the sentinels of Hell with the sign of their crime who will seize them by their forelocks and feet and just as logs of wood are thrown into raging fire, these people shall be thrown into Hell. Here them being thrown into Hell is not stated in words because the way these criminals will be seized signifies this. In the presence of such an indication, such a mention is not required.

The placement of the repetitive verse is very evident: this phase is soon to come before such people; so which of the signs of their Lord will they deny?

هَذِهِ جَهَنَّمُ الَّتِي يُكَذِّبُ بِهَا الْمُجْرِمُونَ (٤٣) يَطُوفُونَ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَ حَمِيمٍ آتٍ (٤٤) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٤٥)²⁴

These verses say that this is the very Hell which the criminals have been denying: the time will finally come when they will circle between its fire and its boiling water. The word *آتٍ* refers to water whose heat has reached its ultimate temperature. These verses depict their extreme helplessness: when the fire of Hell burns them, they will run in search of water but the water too will be boiling at its ultimate degree. Their life will be spent going to and fro between these two. In Surah Ghāshiyah, the words used are: *تَصْلَىٰ نَارًا حَامِيَةً تُسْقَىٰ مِنْ عَيْنٍ آنِيَةٍ* (88:4-5) (they will enter the blazing fire and they will be made to drink from a sizzling spring. (88:4-5))

The placement and context of the repetitive verse is evident: today they are denying the Hereafter and the punishment with great stubbornness; however, when they experience all this, what will they do? How many of God's manifestations will they continue to deny?

Section III (Verses 46-78)

After a mention of the fate of the criminals, the forthcoming verses

24. This is the Hell which the wrongdoers had kept denying. They shall circle between it and its boiling water. So which of your Lord's majesties would you deny?

mention the details of reward which the God-fearing will receive in the Hereafter. This comparison brings to light the complete picture of both groups. The coherence in the discourse is very evident. The only thing that needs to be kept in mind is that verses 46-61 mention the details of the Paradise of the *muqarrabīn* (the near ones to God) and the subsequent verses mention the details of the Paradise of the *aṣḥāb al-yamīn* (companions of the right hand). The details of the difference of status between both these groups is mentioned in the next *sūrah*: Sūrah Wāqī‘ah which forms a pair with the current *sūrah*.

Readers may now proceed to read the coming verses in the light of this background.

وَلَمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ جَنَّاتٍ (٤٦) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٤٧) ذَوَاتَا أَفْنَانٍ (٤٨)
 فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٤٩) فِيهِمَا عَيْنَانِ تَجْرِيَانِ (٥٠) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا
 تُكَذِّبَانِ (٥١) فِيهِمَا مِنْ كُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ زَوْجَانِ (٥٢) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٥٣)
 مُتَكَيِّفِينَ عَلَى فُرُشٍ بَطَائِنُهَا مِنْ إِسْتَبْرَقٍ وَجَنَى الْجَنَّتَيْنِ دَانٍ (٥٤) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا
 تُكَذِّبَانِ (٥٥) فِيهِنَّ قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ لَمْ يَطْمِثْهُنَّ إِنْسٌ قَبْلَهُمْ وَلَا جَانٌّ (٥٦) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ
 رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٥٧) كَانَتْهُنَّ الْيَاقُوتُ وَالْمَرْجَانُ (٥٨) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ
 (٥٩) هَلْ جَزَاءُ الْإِحْسَانِ إِلَّا الْإِحْسَانُ (٦٠) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٦١) وَمِنْ
 دُونِهِمَا جَنَّاتٍ (٦٢) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٦٣) مُدْهَامَتَانِ (٦٤) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ
 رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٦٥) فِيهِمَا عَيْنَانِ نَضَّاحَتَانِ (٦٦) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ
 (٦٧) فِيهِمَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَنَخْلٌ وَرُمَانٌ (٦٨) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٦٩) فِيهِنَّ خَيْرَاتٌ
 حِسَانٌ (٧٠) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٧١) حُورٌ مَقْصُورَاتٌ فِي الْخِيَامِ (٧٢) فَبِأَيِّ
 آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٧٣) لَمْ يَطْمِثْهُنَّ إِنْسٌ قَبْلَهُمْ وَلَا جَانٌّ (٧٤) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا
 تُكَذِّبَانِ (٧٥) مُتَكَيِّفِينَ عَلَى رَفْرَفٍ خُضْرٍ وَعَبْقَرِيٍّ حِسَانٍ (٧٦) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا
 تُكَذِّبَانِ (٧٧) تَبَارَكَ اسْمُ رَبِّكَ ذِي الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ (٧٨)

And for those who feared being brought into the presence of their Lord, there shall be two orchards. So which of your Lord's blessings would you deny? Both will have abundant branches. So which of your Lord's mercies would you deny? Each will be watered by two springs. So which of your Lord's favours would you deny? In them, each fruit will be of a unique type. So which of your Lord's bounties would you

deny? They shall recline on couches lined with thick brocade, and the fruits of both gardens will hang over their heads. So which of your Lord's favours would you deny? Therein will be bashful houris whom neither man nor jinn will have touched before. So which of your Lord's gifts would you deny? Houris like rubies and corals. So which of your Lord's blessings would you deny? The reward of virtue will after all be virtuous? So which of your Lord's virtues would you deny? (46-61)

And besides these, there shall be two other orchards. So which of your Lord's blessings would you deny? Both will be greenish black. So which of your Lord's mercies would you deny? A gushing fountain shall flow in each. So which of your Lord's mercies would you deny? Each will have fruits, dates and pomegranates. So which of your Lord's favours would you deny? In each there shall be houris, noble and gorgeous. So which of your Lord's blessings would you deny? Houris, living in tents. So which of your Lord's graces would you deny? Whom neither man nor jinn will have touched before. So how many of your Lord's bounties would you deny? They shall recline on green sheet cloths and splendid carpets. So which of your Lord's favours would you deny? Blessed is the name of your Lord, the Lord of majesty and glory! (62-78)

Explanation

وَلِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ جَنَّاتٍ (٤٦) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٤٧)²⁵

After the previous verses mention of the fate of the criminals, these refer to the fate of the righteous. Their quality mentioned here is that they fear being brought into the presence of God. A similar allusion to the Day of Judgement is found in the following verse as well: يَوْمَ يَقُومُ النَّاسُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٨٣:٦) (the day when men will rise to stand up before the Lord of the worlds, (83:6)). It needs to be kept in mind that the only thing which keeps a person on the right path is this fear of facing his Lord. If his heart becomes devoid of this fear, then nothing can stop a person from becoming the greatest of criminals.

The verse says that people who fear standing before their Lord will be given two orchards. The word جَنَّاتٍ of the Qur'ān is a comprehensive expression of all the successes of the Hereafter and two orchards are mentioned as a completion of favour: they will receive two orchards. Surah Kahf mentions two orchards in the incident of the companions of the orchards thus: جَعَلْنَا لِأَحَدِهِمَا جَنَّتَيْنِ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَحَفَفْنَاهُمَا بِنَخْلٍ (٣٢:١٨) (to one of them We gave two vineyards surrounded with palm-trees,

25. And for those who feared being brought into the presence of their Lord, there shall be two orchards. So which of your Lord's blessings would you deny?

(18:32)). While explaining this verse, I have written that the two orchards it mentions is for completion of favour: God, out of His favour and grace, had blessed them with two orchards, but these favours led them to be ungrateful instead of being grateful.

After this occurs the repetitive verse, and later it will occur after every mention of a favour of Paradise. In order to understand the eloquence of its placement and occasion, one must keep in mind the fact that people who are addressed here, in the first place, regard the Hereafter to be improbable; and if as a hypothetical supposition they were ready to accept it, they were never ready to accept the fact that the destitute Muslims would have a share in the favours received in the Hereafter. They were of the opinion that if Paradise is a reality, then just as they have been blessed with all the favours of this world, they will be blessed with all the favours of the Hereafter as well. In order to quash this mentality and to crush their pride each and every favour of Paradise is singled out and it is stressed that they are specifically for the pious people of God and at the same time these rejecters are asked: Which of God's favours will they deny? Today, they might summarily dismiss the favours of the Hereafter, but how will they deny them when God grants them to His people and they will end up yearning for them?

ذَوَاتَا أَفْنَانٍ (٤٨) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٤٩)²⁶

This is an expression of the luxuriance and lushness of the two orchards being abundant in trees and vegetation. They will not be desolate and barren: each and every tree will have branches in abundance. After this occurs the repetitive verse. The reason is that the Arabs relished orchards the most and took pride in owning them. How fortunate is a person who possesses a lush green orchard in a dry and hot country! While keeping in view this taste of theirs, it is said that God will bless the righteous with such orchards: so which of God's blessings will they deny?

فِيهِمَا عَيْنَانِ تَجْرِيَانِ (٥٠) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٥١)²⁷

As a guarantee for the luxuriance of these orchards, each will have a fountain running in it. So they should speak up as to which of God's favours will they deny. Thus the occasion and placement of this repetitive verse is very evident.

26. Both will have abundant branches. So which of your Lord's mercies would you deny?

27. Each will be watered by two springs. So which of your Lord's favours would you deny?

فِيهِمَا مِنْ كُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ زَوْجَانِ (٥٢) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٥٣)²⁸

Both orchards will not have the same types of fruit. Each will have its own unique repertoire of fruits. The word زَوْج is used here in a specific meaning which I have explained earlier at an appropriate place. After this, occurs the repetitive verse of which the occasion and placement is very evident.

مُتَكِّئِينَ عَلَى فُرُشٍ بَطَائِنُهَا مِنْ إِسْتَبْرَقٍ وَجَنَى الْجَنَّتَيْنِ دَانٍ (٥٤) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٥٥)²⁹

These companions of Paradise will recline against cushions on couches of which the cloth will be lined with thick brocade. In other words, who can imagine the outer lining of cloths which are internally lined with brocade? Moreover, the fruits in both orchards will be hanging close to the heads: reaching out to them will be of no bother. After this, occurs the repetitive verse whose occasion and placement are very evident.

فِيهِنَّ قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ لَمْ يَطْمِثْهُنَّ إِنْسٌ قَبْلَهُمْ وَلَا جَانٌّ (٥٦) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٥٧) كَأَنَّهُنَّ الْيَاقُوتُ وَالْمَرْجَانُ (٥٨) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٥٩)³⁰

The antecedent of the pronoun in فِيهِنَّ is all the favours mentioned earlier as well as all the gardens, orchards and castles of Paradise which may not have been mentioned in words but which are understood to be obviously implied. Such use of pronouns is very common in Arabic, and example of this can be seen in the previous pages of this *tafsīr*.

The verses further say that among the eternal bliss of these orchards and their resources, there will also be bashful and modest maidens. Such is the nature of a man that unless he has his wife with him he is not able to fully enjoy all these favours. God has made her his partner who shares his joys and sorrows with him. Thus while praising them, the verse says that they shall be bashful and modest. Bashfulness is not only the

28. In them, each fruit will be of a unique type. So how many of your Lord's bounties would you deny?

29. They shall recline on couches lined with thick brocade, and the fruits of both gardens will hang over their heads. So which of your Lord's favours would you deny?

30. Therein will be bashful houris whom neither man nor jinn will have touched before. So which of your Lord's gifts would you deny? Houris like rubies and corals. So which of your Lord's blessings would you deny?

greatest beauty of a woman, it is also the greatest guard of her morality. Women who are not bashful are unfaithful, those who are unfaithful can be sincere to none, and when this is so then as a woman there is no purpose to her existence because she cannot contribute as a building block of a family even though this is the very purpose of her existence.

The words لَمْ يَطْمِئْنَنَّ إِنْسٌ قَبْلَهُمْ وَلَا جَانٌّ are an expression of their virginity and chastity. The comparison with rubies and corals is to bring out their beauty and chastity.

After this, occurs the repetitive verse and its occasion and placement is very evident.

هَلْ جَزَاءُ الْإِحْسَانِ إِلَّا الْإِحْسَانُ (٦٠) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٦١)³¹

After mentioning the features of the orchard of the near ones, here at the end, the addressees are very subtly asked why they are surprised to hear that the Almighty will grant all these favours to His pious people! What else should be the reward of piety and purity except blessings and favours? If the Creator of this universe does not bring forth a day in which the wicked are punished for their sins and the pious are rewarded for their virtue, then this would mean that He does not distinguish between vice and virtue. In fact, what can even be concluded from this is that, God forbid, He likes vice more because after giving the wicked all the resources of life, He has set them free to do whatever they want to and work whatever mischief they desire. A man's intellect and nature can never tolerate such an evil estimation about his Lord. His nature bears witness that the Lord of this universe is very just and merciful. He will punish those who commit sins and greatly reward the pious for their virtues. Since this is something very clearly grounded in human nature and no sensible person in his senses can deny it, it has been stated in a manner which reflects it being an obvious reality. The word إِحْسَان is used for piety as well as for the reward of piety. In this verse, it is used very eloquently in both these meanings.

After this, occurs the repetitive verse: its occasion and placement is that when this reality is certain and all-acknowledged, then the Almighty shall definitely reward a person for each of his pious deeds, so which of His favours will man and jinn deny?

31. The reward of virtue will after all be virtuous? So which of your Lord's virtues would you deny?

وَمِنْ دُونِهِمَا جَنَّتَانِ (٦٢) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٦٣)³²

After a mention of the two orchards, a mention of two more orchards comes up. These two orchards are broadly similar to the previous ones and in some aspects are distinct from one another. The question which arises is: will the same people be worthy of both these types of orchards or will they be different? The correct answer to this question is stated in the next *sūrah*. In it, the believers have been divided into two groups: *aṣḥāb al-maymanah* (companions of the right hand) and *al-sābiqūn* (the foremost) and mentions two separate orchards for the two which are similar to one another in some aspects and dissimilar in some others. Hence, what is more probable is that in this *sūrah* too, the earlier two orchards are meant for the *aṣḥāb al-maymanah* or the *muqarrabīn* (the near ones). Now with this verse begins the mention of the orchards of the *aṣḥāb al-maymanah*. Obviously, just as there is a difference in the status of the two groups, there is a difference in the orchards of the two groups as well, which discerning minds can appreciate. I will also allude to some of the differences in the coming paragraphs. The words مِنْ دُونِهِمَا can be translated as “besides these two” and “in contrast with these two” as well as “lesser than these two”.

After this is the repetitive verse which occurs after the mention of each favour. It would mean that the favours will not end with these two orchards; there will be other orchards as well; so which of the orchards of God will man deny?

مُدْهَامَتَانِ (٦٤) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٦٥)³³

Such will be the state of greenness of these orchards that they will appear to be blackish. This is the most gorgeous of colours of a lush orchard. After this, occurs the repetitive verse of which the occasion and placement is very evident.

فِيهِمَا عَيْنَانِ نَضَّاخَتَانِ (٦٦) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٦٧)³⁴

The word نَضْغُ means something which is “forceful and steaming”. This is a portrayal of mountain springs. For springs which occur on level

32. And besides these, there shall be two other orchards. So which of your Lord's blessings would you deny?

33. Both will be greenish black. So which of your Lord's mercies would you deny?

34. A gushing fountain shall flow in each. So which of your Lord's mercies would you deny?

ground, the word is نَجْرِيَان used earlier which means that they only flow; however, mountainous springs flow with force and vigour. After this, occurs the repetitive verse and its occasion and placement is very evident.

³⁵ فِيهِمَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَتَخْلُ وَرُمَانٌ (٦٨) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٦٩)

A mention of فَاكِهَةٌ (fruit) after رُمَانٌ (pomegranate) and تَخْلُ (dates) is a mention of the specific after the general. Both these are cherished fruits of Arabia. In the mention of earlier orchards, the words were مِنْ كُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ ie each of the two orchards will have different fruits. The difference between these two styles needs to be appreciated. After this, occurs the repetitive verse of which the occasion and placement is very evident.

فِيهِنَّ خَيْرَاتٌ حِسَانٌ (٧٠) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٧١) حُورٌ مَّقْصُورَاتٌ فِي الْخِيَامِ (٧٢) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٧٣) لَمْ يَطْمِثْهُنَّ إِنْسٌ قَبْلَهُمْ وَلَا جَانٌّ (٧٤) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٧٥)³⁶

The expression خَيْرَاتٌ حِسَانٌ means pretty and pious. The expression حُورٌ مَّقْصُورَاتٌ فِي الْخِيَامِ has a special tinge of Arabic taste in it. Living in tents was something very cherished in Arabia. The tents of the affluent people of Arabia were even more classy than their castles and palaces and here the tents are those found in orchards. It was mentioned that there will be bashful maidens in the earlier two orchards and they were compared with corals and rubies. The readers should keep in mind the difference in qualities of the maidens in both sets of the two orchards. After every feature of the maidens, occurs the repetitive verse of which the occasion and placement is very evident.

³⁷ مُتَكَبِّرِينَ عَلَى رَفْرَفٍ خُضْرٍ وَعَبْقَرِيٍّ حِسَانٍ (٧٦) فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٧٧)

The people of these orchards will be reclining on large cushions on green sheets and beautiful rare carpets. The word عَبْقَرِيٍّ is used for rare and expensive things and it can refer to various things keeping in view

35. Each will have fruits, dates and pomegranates. So which of your Lord's favours would you deny?

36. In each there shall be houris, noble and gorgeous. So which of your Lord's blessings would you deny? Houris, living in tents. So which of your Lord's graces would you deny? Whom neither man nor jinn will have touched before. So which of your Lord's blessings would you deny?

37. They shall recline on green sheet cloths and splendid carpets. So which of your Lord's favours would you deny?

the context and occasion. Keeping in view this context and occasion, in my opinion, it qualifies carpets. After this, occurs the repetitive verse of which the occasion and placement is very evident.

³⁸تَبَارَكَ اسْمُ رَبِّكَ ذِي الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ (٧٨)

Just as earlier on when after mentioning arguments to substantiate reward and punishment, it was said: كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَإِنَّ (٢٦) وَيَبْقَى وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ, in a similar manner, after elaborating upon some other details of reward and punishment, the same verse is repeated here. The purpose of this repetition is that since blessed is the Lord of the Prophet – the Lord of Majesty and Glory, hence all these favours and blessings will necessarily manifest themselves. Foolish are the people who think that the Almighty after creating this world has no concern with its good and evil. Just as in the earlier verse, the word وَجْهُ (face) was used to signify the being of God, in this verse the word اسْمُ (name) is used for this purpose. The name signifies the entity it stands for.

If the features of the orchards mentioned in the previous verses are deliberated upon, it will become evident that the favours pointed out in the orchards mentioned earlier reflect more the taste of the non-Arabs, while those mentioned later reflect more the taste of the Arabs. Though these favours are stated in the form of simile, their real form is known to God alone. The purpose of this mention is that this comparison to some extent brings a broad picture of these favours before us.

I am grateful to God that today on the 24th of Ramaḍān al-Mubārak 1397 AH, I am able to complete the *tafsīr* of this *sūrah*. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى إِحْسَانِهِ (gratitude be to God for His favours).

Lahore,

10th September 1977 AD

24th Ramaḍān al-Mubārak 1397 AH

38. Blessed is the name of your Lord, the Lord of majesty and glory!